

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-17. Cancelled.

18. (New) A messaging platform including:

a message store arranged to receive message data and to store said message data for subsequent retrieval;

a control interface arranged to allow the communication of control signals between the messaging platform and a service provider; and

an overload controller provider on the control interface and responsive to an overload condition of the platform and arranged, in response to the said overload condition, to limit loading of the platform by signals arriving on said control interface.

19. (New) A platform as in claim 18 wherein said control interface is arranged to receive control requests instructing transactions on the messaging platform, and wherein said overload controller includes means for denying at least some of the control requests in response to the overload condition.

20. (New) A platform as in claim 18 further comprising:

an access controller arranged to receive data and control channels from one or more service providers and connected to said overload controller, wherein said overload controller

limits loading of said platform by signals arriving on the control interface by functioning in combination with said access controller.

21. (New) A platform as in claim 18 further comprising:

an access controller arranged to receive data and control channels from one or more service providers and connected to said overload controller, wherein said overload controller limits loading of said platform by signals arriving on the control interface by functioning in combination with said access controller, wherein said overload controller functions in combination with said access controller to limit loading of said platform by signals arriving on the control interface by configuring the access controller to deny access to the platform of certain predetermined signals.

22. (New) A platform as in claim 18 wherein said service provider comprises an end user.

23. (New) A platform as in claim 18 wherein:

said control interface is arranged to receive control requests instructing transactions on the messaging platform,

said overload controller includes means for denying at least some of the control requests in response to the overload condition, and

said overload controller detects the rate of transactions between the access controller and a plurality of said service providers.

24. (New) A platform as in claim 18 in which the overload controller is programmed with criteria for applying different classes of service to control requests received at the control interface and the overload controller is arranged, in response to an overload condition on the platform, selectively to deny control requests depending on a class of service assigned in accordance with the said criteria to the control request.

25. (New) A platform as in claim 18 in which:

the overload controller is programmed with criteria for applying different classes of service to control requests received at the control interface;

the overload controller is arranged, in response to an overload condition on the platform, selectively to deny control requests depending on a class of service assigned in accordance with the said criteria to the control request, and

the criteria apply a class of service selected depending on the identity of a service provider originating the said control requests.

26. (New) A platform as in claim 18 in which the overload controller is programmed with criteria for applying different classes of service to control requests received at the control interface and the overload controller is arranged, in response to an overload condition on the platform, selectively to deny control requests depending on a class of service assigned in accordance with the said criteria to the control request, and in which the criteria apply a class of service selected depending on the identity of a subscriber mailbox to which the control request applies.

27. (New) A platform as in claim 18 in which the overload controller is programmed with criteria for applying different classes of service to control requests received at the control interface and the overload controller is arranged, in response to an overload condition on the platform, selectively to deny control requests depending on a class of service assigned in accordance with the said criteria to the control request, and in which the criteria apply different service classes depending on the transaction requested by the control request.

28. (New) A messaging system comprising:

a service platform running a messaging service application; and a messaging platform comprising: a message store arranged to receive message data and to store said message data for subsequent retrieval;

a control interface arranged to allow the communication of control signals between the messaging platform and a service provider; and

an overload controller provided on the control interface and responsive to an overload condition of the platform and arranged, in response to the said overload condition, to limit loading of the platform by signals arriving on said control interface;

wherein said control interface is arranged to connect said messaging platform to the service platform, and said messaging platform is arranged to receive control requests from the service platform via said control interface.

29. (New) A messaging system as in claim 28 in which the service platform is remote from the messaging platform.

30. (New) A communications network including a messaging platform as in claim 18.

31. (New) A communications network including a messaging system as in claim 28.

32. (New) A method of operating a messaging platform, the messaging platform comprising a message store arranged to receive message data and to store said message data for subsequent retrieval, a control interface arranged to allow the communication of control signals between the messaging platform and a service provider; and an overload controller provided on the control interface and responsive to an overload condition of the platform and arranged, in response to the said overload condition, to limit loading of the platform by signals arriving on said control interface, the method comprising:

- a) storing message data on the messaging platform;
- b) subsequently outputting message data from the platform, thereby allowing retrieval of a corresponding message;
- c) detecting an overload condition of the messaging platform; and, in response to the overload condition; and
- d) limiting loading of the messaging platform by signals arriving on the control interface.

33. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

e) receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform.

34. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform;

applying different classes of service to the control requests; and,

in response to the overload condition, selectively denying some only of the control requests depending on the class of service applied to the control requests.

35. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform;

applying different classes of service to the control requests; and, in response to the overload condition;

selectively denying some only of the control requests depending on the class of service applied to the control requests; and

applying different classes of service to control requests depending on the identity of an originating service provider.

36. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform;

applying different classes of service to the control requests; and, in response to the overload condition;

selectively denying some only of the control requests depending on the class of service applied to the control requests; and

applying different classes of service to control requests depending on identities of customer mailboxes to which the control requests apply.

37. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform

includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform;

applying different classes of service to the control requests; and, in response to the overload condition;

selectively denying some only of the control requests depending on the class of service applied to the control requests; and

applying different classes of service to control requests depending on the transaction requested by the control request.

38. (New) A method as in claim 32 further comprising:

receiving via the control interface of the message platform control requests instructing a transaction on the messaging platform, wherein the step of limiting loading of the platform includes denying at least some of the control requests received via the control interface access to the platform;

applying different classes of service to the control requests;

in response to the overload condition, selectively denying some only of the control requests depending on the class of service applied to the control requests; and

applying different classes of service to control requests depending on the transaction requested by the control request;

wherein the messaging platform includes:

a plurality of mailboxes containing message data, each mailbox being switchable between an open state, in which message data may be written to or read from the mailbox, and a closed state, and

in which the step of limiting loading includes allowing requests for the closing of a mailbox and denying requests for the opening of a mailbox.